pennsylvania musician

magazine

Vol.39 #447 Jan. 2021

Madison Ryan

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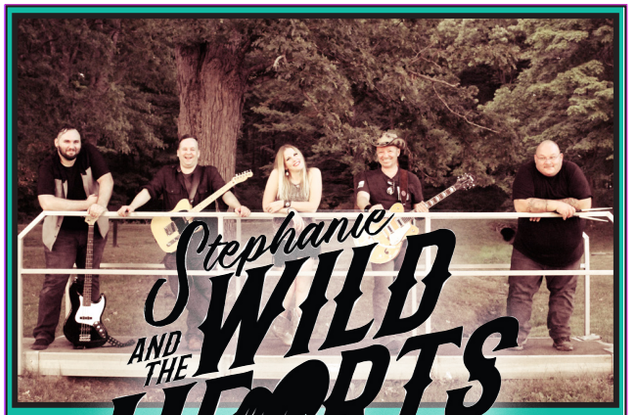

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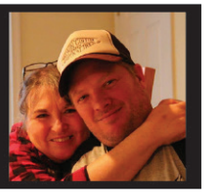
Editor Ramblings By Josh Noll



Welcome to the year 2021 good bye 2020 we will not miss you. As the new year rings in everyone is acting like a magic switch will be flipped and 2021 will be roses and rainbows. I wish it was that easy but the truth is a lot of people are still hurting and the Covid is not going to just disappear this week. Thank god we now have a vaccine and hopefully they can start getting it to the masses and we can start earning that herd immunity we all dream of. I'm afraid that this winter is going to be more restrictions and less freedom. Maybe by spring we will be able to start getting back to life as we know it although I fear the scars of Covid will remain for years to come and we may never be back to life as it was, in what will now be known as the Early 2000's. Will masks ever disappear? I doubt it some people will still wear them similar to some foreign countries, and if that is what makes them feel safe so be it. Will concerts ever be the same? Will mosh pits return? Will we ever be able to stand in a sweaty crowd of people yelling lyrics to our favorite songs, drinking beer without food, with the smell of joints passing through the crowd from one potential carrier to the next? These are important questions and ones that keep me up at night. To think you would try to explain this to the next generation, as you sit in a contained bubble watching a concert, is a travesty. Going to your first concert should be something you always remember and cherish. Lets hope that the next generation gets to enjoy them the way we did.

As we usher in the new year everyone likes to talk about New Years Resolutions. I for one have always hated them. I don't think I have ever followed through with one which is sad. (Pretty sure if you would read last years January article I was going to lose weight this year. Well lets just say that didn't happen haha). I feel sitting around in October and November talking about "once the new year hits I'm quitting smoking, or I'm losing weight, or I'm going to save money" is just a waste of time. There is never a better time to change yourself then the present and we shouldn't need a certain date to flick the switch. So lets all flick the switch and get things done this year quit making excuses and get out and follow your dreams.

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★ X-15 Will Land at Hbg's Metron
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Speaking of dreams, I am living one there is not too many people who can say that they work and survive in the local music industry. It's hard to believe that in June I will have made it through 3 years in the publishing business. Print in either newspaper or magazine form is a dying bread and a lot of people for years have been saying that the PA Musician Magazine will not last. Its funny I remember being a kid and listening to the same thing from friends or foes saying that the paper will never last (I'd like to thank everyone that ever told me that you are the reason I took it over). Well guess what its 39 years later and we are still here! The dream that Whitey and Robin (mom and dad) started in 1982 is still chugging along. There have been countless other music mags in our area but sadly none have survived. To be the last in the game that still prints is very important to me. So to be doing an online only issue for the first month of 2021 is a real bummer in my book. Don't worry we will print again and if things stay open we will be printing next month and hopefully continue for the rest of the year. That being said we really need the help of the local music community to do so. The way the paper works and how it has survived for so many years has not changed.

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Ok that being said I would like to thank everyone who has continued to support us even with just being an online only issue. It would be easy for me to "Conform" and be the next magazine that doesn't print but that's not going to happen. Whitey still can't believe that people still support us even if it's only online. It's a new world out there and I want the next generation to be able to find a 25 year old PA Musician Magazine and say "wow look at the hair on this guy" and "how did he fit in those pants?". Followed by some day I'll have a picture of my band on the cover of the PA Musician Magazine. That is what dreams are made of and that is why we are here. Peace love and harmonies, see you next month.

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OUT 'N' ABOUT

By Rachel Rocks

Happy NEW Year!! We made it to 2021. I'm not sure exactly what that means, but I do know it opens up the world to new hope and new possibilities, but the most important thing and most powerful think I know is we do not give up! I'm getting quite amazed by how resilient and creative we've all become to keep the music alive in Pennsylvania and beyond!

I'll be honest and say this is the 2nd start to my article this month. I started doing a yearly recap on how the past year went, but then I decided it was like I was spiraling into a rabbit hole, and if you REALLY care about any of the nonsense we have already survived as a music scene, please feel free to read any of our past articles on our website, www.pamusician.net. The archives are there.. in all of their glory.

I thought I'd focus more on the good/positive things. Last night I was at a show outside. It was a balmy 39 degrees, but DMC Duo played out front of the Hook & Flask Still Works in Carlisle. They literally played in the berm of the road while we were all huddled under heaters on the sidewalk. It wasn't ideal for anyone, but we managed to have a good time, and DMC Duo just played straight through their whole show because they knew if they stopped, not only would we all leave, but they wouldn't want to have a re-freeze of their fingers and toes after a tiny bit of warmth. It was a lot of fun, and I'm grateful to start my 1st weekend of the year out with some live music!

Stonewood was busy this holiday weekend with not only a live and crazy show outside in front of Burning Bridge Tavern on New Years Eve, but also inside the Red Rose on January 2nd, operating with full service, including a band inside. The venue was packed and I'm just hoping the band and the patrons all stay healthy.

I'm on both sides of the fence. I appreciate being out with friends and I know how important it is to my mental state, but just so everyone knows, I am well aware that Covid-19 is real. I know people have been very sick, and unfortunately people have died. It is extremely heart breaking and it is a risk I accept. I can tell you it is not mentally healthy when people bash me with messages and texts about decisions I have made. I hope people accept me for who I am and what I am doing. I hope that people let me do me, and know that I am fully aware of any risk I am taking for me and my family.

As I am writing this on January 3rd, The 25th Annual Millennium Music Conference is still happening February 26th and 27th at the Hilton Hotel in Harrisburg. I've heard talks of still attempting to have some live acts, but there will also be virtual acts of amazing musicians that unfortunately can't travel to the area. There will also be virtual and hopefully live panels and mentoring sessions. One thing

DMC DUO at Hook & Flask photo by Rachel Rocks

we've definitely learned is it is amazing how we can be connected virtually in this ever-changing world. I'm sure John Harris and his team will be watching all of the last mandates, and make the MMC once again, another year to remember with friends we will never forget!

Another big event coming up in March is the 2nd Annual Central PA Music Awards. The goal is to have the full live show on March 25th, if there are any Covid related state restrictions, they will push the date out. The Whitaker Center theatre is almost sold out already, if you haven't done

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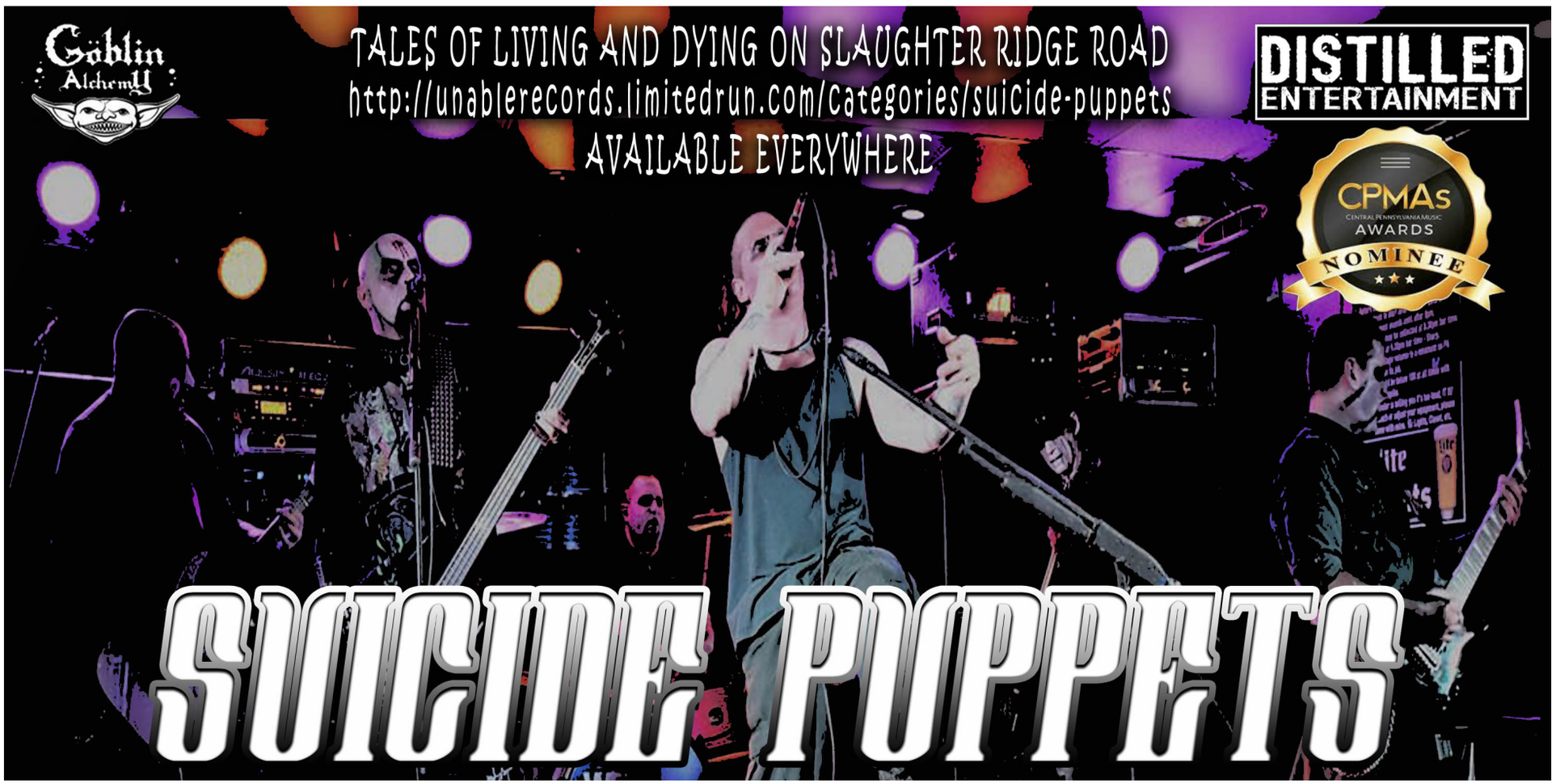

so yet, get on the website and order your tickets! They will possibly be offering overflow seating in the IMAX Digital Cinema, where the live broadcast will be simulcasted so then more people can enjoy the preshow festivities and the after party! For those that don't want to come to the party, there will also be a livestream of the ceremony online. But right now, voting is OPEN until January 15th. If you haven't yet, get to the website and vote! www.cpmhof.com/awards. The winners will be announced at the show. I will again be announcing the Best Metal Band, now I just have to decide on my outfit. I know I am

DMC DUO at Hook & Flask

ready for the party, that's for sure!

Thank you to all of the musicians, businesses, etc. who have been creative and have kept the music scene alive in PA. Also, a huge kudos and thanks to the boss man Josh Noll for keeping the magazine alive. This has been a crazy ride for all of us. The magazine has definitely taken a hard hit. I know we are trying our best to support, share, love and like all of the posts we possibly can on Facebook, and we have continued to publish an issue every month. Some of those months have been online only, but we are doing all that we can do to promote, support, and continue spreading the love of music throughout the state. When Josh called me and said he was taking over the magazine, I thought he was crazy, but in true Josh fashion he has taken the reigns and is currently riding over the hills and valleys trying to survive as a small business owner in a Pandemic world. I know times are tough for everyone, but if you have an album, song, gig, event, and you would like to promote it, please consider advertising with us. We support our advertisers as much as possible, and we would love to support you!

I know I don't have much to write about this month, but I really hope we can all just get along this year and just continue to Be Kind and Spread Love to those around us. Hopefully I will see you all Out and About real soon! In the meantime check out our website, www.pamusician.net. Please support local music and small businesses.

In Loving Memory
Chad Salvaggio 1966-2021

Chad Salvaggio – The Pennsylvania Music Scene lost another great musician today, Jan 4, 2021. Whether you knew him from on the stage, or behind the stage, he was an amazing person with a deep soul. He was loved by all who knew him. We all had quite a few laughs and shared some really amazing hugs. He was currently drumming with the Nate Myers Trio and Strangest of Places. Our deepest condolences go out to his family, friends, and band mates.

photo by Rachel Rocks

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2020 Memories in photos by Rachel Rocks

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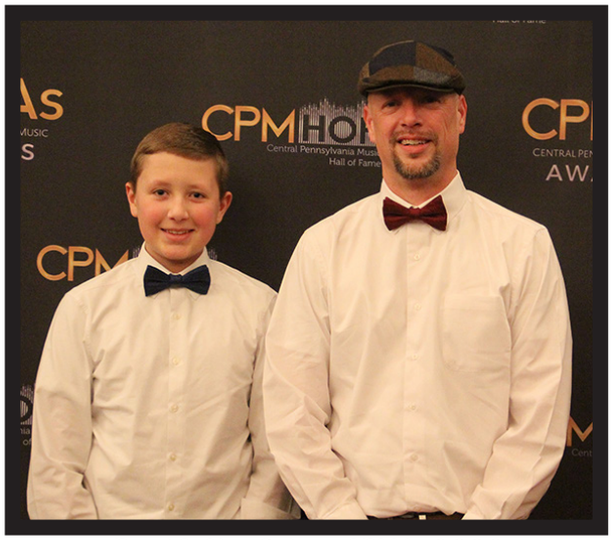

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IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, EVERYTHING CAN CHANGE. SO FORGIVE OFTEN AND LOVE WITH ALL YOUR HEART. YOU MAY NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU MAY NOT HAVE THAT CHANCE AGAIN.

NATIONALS

By Eric Hoffman

Greetings Rockers 'N' Rollers! Welcome to 2021 and hopefully the return of live music. The Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of Fame has announced its 2nd annual awards show for March 25 at Harrisburg's Whitaker Center. This year's inductees include: The Badlees, Jimmy Dorsey, Tommy Dorsey, Jeffrey Gaines, Halestorm and Pentagon. The event is subject to government guidelines at the time of show and Whitaker Center will abide by all restrictions and recommendations for the audience size/capacity.

Andrea Bocelli's ticketed livestream "Believe In Christmas Concert" on December 12th was the most successful online ticketed classical event of all time. Live-streamed from Italy's majestic Teatro Regio di Parma Opera House built in 1829, drew some 70,000 fans from 120 countries who paid $25 each and generated an impressive gross of $1.75 million. Bocelli's 8-year old daughter, Virginia, however possibly stole the show. The prodigy-like child acted as her father's guide while her angelic voice soared on a heart-melting duet with her father on Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah." This was really the first time Virginia's been in the spotlight, and she's a natural. Bocelli's Easter "Concert For Hope" live-streamed free on April 12th from Milan's historic Duomo Cathedral elicited 2.8 million concurrent views and then 28 million views within its firs 24 hours. It currently stands at 42 million views.

On December 21st Congress officially passed the long-awaited $900 billion Covid-19 Relief Package, which notably included $15 billion for the "Save Our Stages Act," a bill dedicated to funding for live music venues, independent movie theaters, and cultural institutions. No exact details were given on how the "Save Our Stages" funds will be distributed. The bill provides Pandemic Unemployment Assistance which will help the millions of people who lost their jobs through no fault of their own during this economic crisis. The relief bill marks the first significant federal aid package during the pandemic and global crisis since April. While the bill is less than half the $2.2 trillion stimulus law

continued on next page..

Eric & Jeffrey Gaines

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enacted in March, the New York Times noted that it is still "one of the largest relief packages in modern history."

BTS has become such a global phenomenon that Time magazine named the South Korean group its 2020 Entertainer of the Year. The magazine announced the honor for the seven-member K-pop boy band citing BTS' massive global presence amid the pandemic, including leveraging their massive fan base to support causes like Black Lives Matter. The group has become a staple of recent awards shows, performing their flashy No. 1 hit "Dynamite." The song in November brought BTS its first Grammy nomination.

Bob Dylan's entire catalog of songs, has been acquired by Universal Music Publishing Group for over $300 million. The catalog includes such modern standards as "Blowin' In The Wind," "The Times They Are a-Changin'," "Knockin' On Heaven's Door," and "Like a Rolling Stone," a body of work that may only be matched by the Beatles, whose songs were re-acquired by Paul McCartney in 2017 after changing hands several times, for its breadth and influence. Dylan topped the Rolling Stone list of the 100 Greatest Songwriters of All Time in 2015 and the song "Like A Rolling Stone" was named by the magazine as the best ever written. Dylan's lyrical depth to his music that eventually earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016. He is the only songwriter to receive the award. Dylan first entered the public consciousness with New York City's Greenwich Village folk scene during the early 1960s. Bob Dylan has sold more than 125 million records globally.

Beyoncé's album "Black Parade" is the leading contender at this year's Grammys with nine nominations. A winner of 24 Grammys, Beyoncé becomes the second-most nominated act in the history of the awards show with 79 nominations. She is tied with Paul McCartney, who earned a nomination this year for best boxed or special limited edition package. Beyoncé is only behind her husband Jay-Z and Quincy Jones, who have both earned 80 nominations each. Jay-Z has won 22 Grammys throughout his career. Taylor Swift, Dua Lipa and Roddy Ricch, each earned six nominations. First-time nominees include BTS, the Strokes, Megan Thee Stallion, Michael Kiwanuka, Jay Electronica and Harry Styles. Winners will be announced at the live show on Jan. 31.

Taylor Swift released her second album in 2020. "To put it plainly, we just couldn't stop writing songs," Swift stated, "I've never done this before. In the past I've always treated albums as one-off eras and moved onto planning the next one after an album was released." The new album is called Evermore, which she described as a "sister" album to her latest release, Folklore. The 31-year old singer, released Folklore, this summer, became the first album to sell a million copies in the U.S. in 2020.

The autopsy of Eddie Van Halen revealed the immediate cause of death was a cerebrovascular event, such as a stroke. Pneumonia, the blood disorder myelodysplastic syndrome and lung cancer were also cited as underlying issues. Eddie was cremated on October 28 and his ashes went to his 29-year old son, Wolfgang. One of Eddie's final wishes was reportedly for his ashes to be scattered off the coast of Malibu, California. Eddie died at Providence Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica with his wife, Janie, by his side along with Wolfgang and brother Alex Van Halen.

2020 marked the passing of many legendary artists including: Neil Peart (Rush), Kenny Rogers, Bill Withers, Adam Schlesinger (Fountains of Wayne), John Prine, Little Richard, Charlie Daniels, Ecstasy (Whodini), Justin Townes Earle, Mac Davis, Charley Pride and Eddie Van Halen.

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The Patriot News has called the MMC event "wildly successful" and it's the largest and most reputable music conference and showcase in the Mid-Atlantic region. In light of the Covid-19 Pandemic the annual event will follow the current Commonwealth Of Pennsylvania health and safety guidelines to offer a hybrid event including a virtual and in-person conference and showcase. Working with the Hilton Harrisburg Hotel & Conference Center, Harrisburg University and select venues our plans for a limited physical event in 2021 will be provided in updates as more information becomes available.
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Madison Ryan: Coming Out of the Dark

By: Rachel Rocks

Madison Ryan is an alternative-pop artist from right here in Harrisburg, PA. She has been playing shows and turning heads in the music scene since 2018 when she released her first EP ***"Primary"***. She was a shocking emerging artist, so much so, that by July of 2018 she was playing at SummerFest in Milwaukee as part of their 2018 Emerging Artists Series. Her EP ***"Primary"*** even charted on the Billboard Heatseekers Chart, and the ***"Paranoid"*** official video has over 100k views on YouTube.

When Madison was about 13 years old, she decided to record herself singing *'Make You Feel My Love'* after listening to Adele cover the iconic song. She was proud of herself, so she played it for her parents. Even though she was surrounded by music all of her life she never really saw herself as a singer, but on this day, everything seemed to click, and Madison decided to see where her musical talents would take her. As the word spread throughout the local music community, Madison would be invited up on stage to sing a song or two, before she knew it, she started writing, and then there was no turning back. Madison is extremely lucky to have the support of her parents. Since her Dad was in various bands throughout the area, he had a good foundation of great contacts within the music industry and we all know how important it is to "know the right people".

Madison was very fortunate to record her first EP with producers Matt Malpass and Matt Holmes. Both guys helped her turn her sound into what she wanted, a great mix of the melodies, hooks, and storytelling of Taylor Swift, mixed with the energy and spunk of Panic! At the Disco. Even though recording and completing her EP took nearly two years it turned into what she wanted, "a perfect mix with something for everyone".

Since then Madison has recorded and released her single ***"Avant Garden"*** which is nominated for the 'Best Song of the Year' in the Central PA Music Awards for 2020, and Madison herself is nominated as the 'Best Pop Band/Artist' of the year. If you haven't done so yet, check out her music on youtube, spotify, itunes, etc, give her a listen, and then go vote for Madison at www.cpmhof.com/awards, the voting ends on January 15th.

As with many people, this pandemic caused Madison to struggle heavily with anxiety and depression. Luckily the struggle with depression led her to write her latest song ***"Dark"*** which will be released on January 29th. ***"Dark"*** helps describe the battle of finding ways to stand up to your own mind and bring yourself out of those deep dark places. She unfortunately can't play a super cool single release show, which she would love to do, but she will be hopping on a live stream at some point to connect with her fans and promote her song to the best of her pandemic ability. ***"Dark"*** was recorded by Brandon Shoop and Matt Holmes. She will be releasing a video visualizer that was recorded and directed by Josh Nesmith. Madison hopes to really focus on her music throughout 2021, her goal is to release a new single about every six weeks throughout the year. She will be releasing ***"Dark"*** with Level a new Digital Distribution Service that will allow her to quickly distribute her song worldwide.

When Madison has the opportunity to play a live show, she is very lucky to be supported by some amazing musicians, but when it comes to recording and writing it is usually just her. She has grown a lot as not only an artist, but an overall human being the past few years. Music has taught her so much about herself and has become such an outlet for her, it has literally helped her to stay sane, especially these last few months. She misses playing shows so much, and just going to shows. As we are all saying, she will never take another gig for granted ever again!

Madison is so lucky to have an awesome support team, but especially her Mom and Dad, and her entire family. She is thankful for the producers on all of her songs have helped her learn so much more about music in general and have listened to her and helped her develop and grow into the artist she wants to be. She is blessed to have such amazing friends that love her music and support her in every way possible.

Unfortunately the only way to check out Madison Ryan right now is online, almost anywhere.. Her website is **www.madisonryanmusic.com** Instagram is @sadison Twitter: @sadisoncryin and her Facebook Page can be found at **Madison Ryan**. She also has 4 videos on **YouTube** that have all been recorded by Josh Nesmith. The videos really give you a great glimpse into the true meaning behind each song. Please make sure and tune in to your favorite Social Media platform on Friday, January 29th to check out her latest single, ***"Dark***" as soon as it is released.

THE PROFESSOR

By Jim Price

If you have ever listened to any of the "Year In Review Special" editions of my weekly local music radio program, the "Homegrown Rocker," I always open that program with a song created by my friend, musician and former radio colleague Mark Wesesky and his Mark Allen Project, called "Happy New Year (Toss Me a Beer)," an ode to the joys of staying home on New Year's Eve. As of the time I am writing this month's article, I face the prospect of spending my New Year's Eve at home for the first time in at least two decades, and any live music I might witness that night will be either from live-streaming or television. Hopefully 2021 will see us leave this pandemic and its restrictions in the rearview mirror permanently, and allow live music and the entertainment industry to get back on its feet. Here's hoping for a much better New Year!

And to musicians, music venues and music-related businesses – keep the faith. Once we begin to exit this pandemic and pandemonium, people are going to want to feel human again – many are going to want to be able to socialize with friends and colleagues, and music and entertainment will provide a major catalyst for that to happen. After many months of not being able to enjoy live concerts and festivals, many people – myself included – are chomping at the bit to get back to these happy events. Live music will be an important ingredient for bringing people back together, and also serving as a healing force after the ordeal that has been 2020 and the COVID pandemic.

Before the new wave of COVID restrictions again forced live music off public stages for the time being, I was able to catch a few live performances, all at McGarvey's in Altoona. Buckshot Tea Party brought the rock to McGarvey's stage on Black Friday in late November. RJ Payne on lead vocals, Rich Johnson on lead guitar, Sid Brandon on rhythm guitar, Bill Nusom on bass and Dave Russell

Rich Johnson / Buckshot Tea Party

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behind the drum kit levied hard-rocking favorites with an emphasis on the 1990s. This group sounded strong as they did numbers from Foo Fighters, Fuel, Velvet Revolver, Creed, Collective Soul, Metallica, Seether, Tonic, Incubus, Jimmy Eat World and more. Some of the highlights included the Metallica take on "Whiskey in the Jar," dedicated in memory of recently-fallen musician "Big Jim" Ricotta; as well as their takes on Tonic's "If You Could Only See," the nightcap set-opening double-shot of Flock of Seagulls' "I Ran" into Dead or Alive's "You Spin Me Round (Like a Record)," and the surprise closing rendition of The Tragically Hip's "New Orleans Is Sinking." RJ and Bill handled the lead singing duties and both their voices were in good form; Rich's guitar leads sounded clean and precise, and the rhythm section provided the sturdy, rumbling backbone behind the entire performance. Once live music can get back on stage again, Buckshot Tea Party is well worth checking out for a solid dose of hard-hitting live rock!

RJ and Dave were back on McGarvey's stage in early December as local country favorites 100 Proof struck up the party with three sets of upbeat country favorites with a few rocking numbers mixed in. RJ on vocals, Dave behind the drum kit, guitarists Todd Belardi and Denny Yon, and

RJ Payne / Buckshot Tea Party

Moose on bass kicked it off with Jason Aldean's "Just Getting' Started," and took the audience through rowdy country favorites from Eric Church, Luke Bryan, Jon Pardi, Randy Houser, Luke Combs, Brantley Gilbert, Big & Rich and more. The group also did their country-rocking slant on "Wagon Wheel," and provided a slow-dancing opportunity with their version of Luke Combs' "She Got the Best of Me" to close their first set. 100 Proof also broke out a few rocking tunes along the way, including Bryan Adams' "Summer of 69," Rick Springfield's "Jessie's Girl," and – the big surprise for me – Seether's "Remedy!" Other highlights included their take on Big & Rich's "Save a Horse Ride a Cowboy," which infused an "Uptown Funk" interlude midway through, and a version of Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats' "Son Of a Bitch" during their third set. When the McGarvey's audience called for one more at night's end, 100 Proof took it overtime with Toby Keith's "Should Have Been a Cowboy" to cap the night. These guys sounded sharp all the way; RJ's voice was strong, and instrumentally the group kept it punchy and exciting.

Many folks don't know Jack Squat...at least as of yet. But some music fans got to know them a whole lot better at McGarvey's early last month. The band name is fairly

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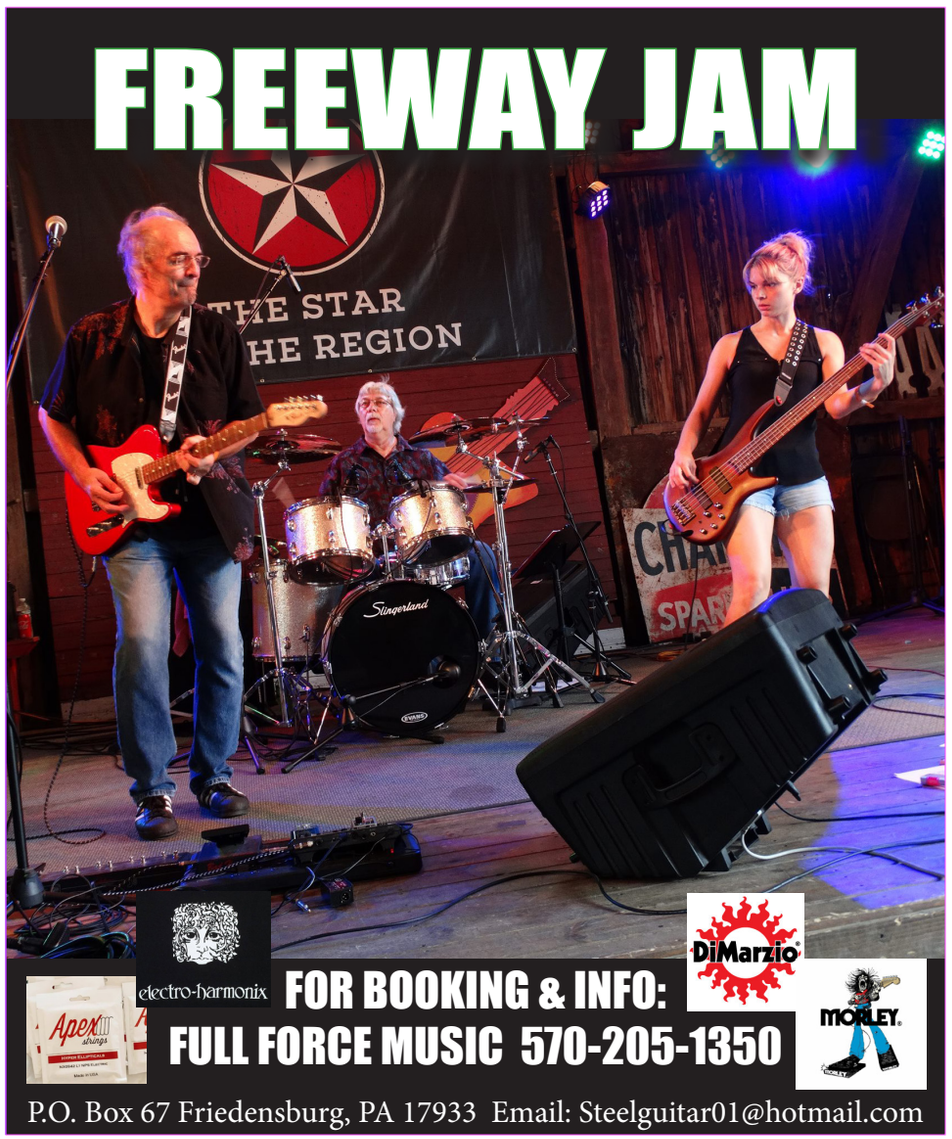

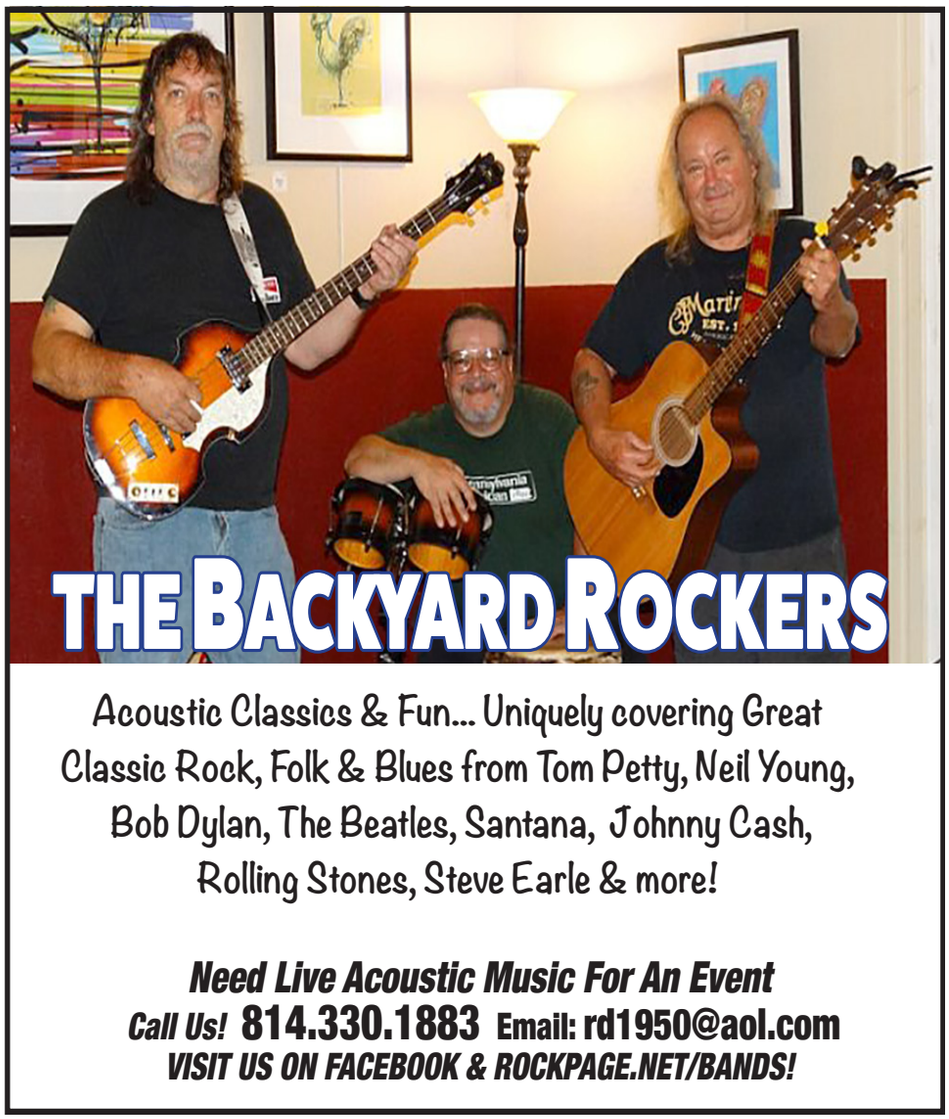
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Bill Nusom/ Buckshot Tea Party

The Professor continued....

new, but the band members' names are established musicians of the Altoona area music scene – Scott Imler on lead vocals and guitar, Ron Dalansky on guitar and vocals, Todd Batzel on bass and Dan McConnell on drums. Jack Squat delivered a good-sounding mixture of 1970s, 80s and 90s rocking classics, including a number of tunes I haven't heard in ages from the Scorpions, Dokken, Honeymoon Suite, Cinderella – heck, they even teased Coney Hatch's "Monkey Bars!" They also did favorites from AC/DC, Boston, Judas Priest, Van Halen, Whitesnake, Tesla, Foreigner, Led Zeppelin, Kiss, Nazareth and many more. Scott brought the soaring vocal range and power throughout the night – perhaps exemplified best on Jack Squat's version of Vandenberg's 1980s classic "Burning Heart!" The group's instrumental delivery was tight, and their vocal harmonies shined. And the group welcomed guest Joe George up to take over bass duties on versions of Alice In Chains' "Man in the Box" and Grand Funk Railroad's "We're An American Band." As with the aforementioned Buckshot Tea Party, fans looking for a hearty dose of hard-hitting rock should get to know Jack Squat once live music returns to the stages!

Everything else I have seen in recent weeks has been through the computer screen…Prior to Thanksgiving, I saw State College-based singer and songwriter Eric Ian Farmer as he did a brief live stream a cappella performance plus a question-and-answer session on Zoom, both part of a Barnes & Noble-sponsored Bookfair fundraiser for the Mid State Literacy Council. Eric performed three songs – his original song "Mother's Wisdom," "I Want to Live" and "Perennial." He then fielded questions from online visitors

Todd Batzel / Jack Squat

about his music, creative process and the value of books and literacy. Asked about his "vocally grown" approach to music, Eric explained that he envisions his song ideas vocally, not with a guitar. Asked what song was closest to his heart. Eric said that there is always a song in his heart, but not a specific song. And when asked to identify his favorite book, Eric responded with two titles – "Being Peace" by Nobel Peace Prize nominee Thich Nhat Hanh, and "Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence" by Doris Pilkington.

Also prior to Thanksgiving, renowned PA singer, songwriter and educator Van Wagner hosted a special live stream Zoom event, dubbed the "T'anksgiving Flatbottom Town Anniversary Strum & Sing Along with Van Wagner" concert and jam session. Coordinated with his fan group Facebook website North Of 80, Van performed an hour of his original songs including multiple requests, while visitors could enjoy the performance, or sing or jam along to the songs with their favorite instruments, as all songs came from a songbook that can downloaded for free from Van's website. (I ended up multi-tasking; enjoying the concert as a spectator, strumming along to several songs on my watermelon ukulele, and – of course, breaking out my sketch pad and ballpoint pens to capture Van in pen ink glory!) Van did favorites and requests from throughout his vast song catalog, including "Tioga County," "Churches and Bars," "Flat Bottom Town," "Shagbark Hickory," "Ash to Ash," "Ridge Runner," "Mountain Lion," "Where the Bears Dance," and the popular closer (and namesake song of the fan group) "North of 80." Van also shared with the audience a project he has been working on, carving a canoe paddle from chestnut; he said he plans to create a limited quantity of these to donate toward charitable causes (such

continued on next page..

Dan McConnelll / Jack Squat

Ron Dalansky / Jack Squat

as the Smoked Country Jam Bluegrass Festival). This was a pleasant performance, and informative as well, as Van – an educator about Pennsylvania, its history and attractions – shared insights behind some of his songs.

I enjoyed plenty of online Christmas-themed performances during the holiday season. Since I have never seen them live in concert before, I took the plunge and checked out the Trans-Siberian Orchestra's live-streaming concert last month. It was TSO's "Christmas Eve and Other Stories" live-streaming performance with full band, various singers, narrator, lights, lasers and more. With musical direction by founding member Al Pitrelli and Derek Wieland, the production featured the current band – Pitrelli and Chris Caffery on guitars, Wieland and Mee Eun Kim on keyboards, Asha Mevlana on violin, John Lee Middleton on bass and Jeff Plate on drums – plus storyteller Bryan Hicks and the vocal contingent of Russell Allen, Nate Amor, John Brink, Erika Jerry, Chloe Lowery, Georgia Napolitano and Jeff Scott Soto. Although lacking the live audience and in-person feel, this was still a great and powerful presentation, with the various lighting, camera angles and focuses bringing each performer's presence to the fore. It also served to remind me just how great an album Trans-Siberian Orchestra's "Christmas Eve and Other Stories" is. Back when I heard it for the first time in the 1990s, it was one of very few albums that could bring tears to my eyes – especially the song "Old City Bar." I still felt some of that emotion surge as TSO played the album in its entirety this night. Hopefully if Trans-Siberian Orchestra decides to tour again after we get past the pandemic, I might finally get to see the actual live concert; this live stream event clearly rekindled my interest in that possibility.

Scott Imler / Jack Squat

Hayley Prosser & Sara Zebley/ Steel Blossoms

The Steel Blossoms also helped get me into the holiday mood with their special Christmas live stream performance early last month. Western PA natives (and former elementary school teachers) now living in Nashville, Hayley Prosser and Sara Zebley performed a pleasant, lighthearted set of folk and Americana-flavored Christmas favorites. Both women showed fine singing voices and bright harmonies as they strummed acoustic guitars, with Hayley even picking up the ukulele for a couple of tunes. They did popular carols such as "Angels We Have Heard on High," "Silent Night" and their set-closer "Oh Holy Night," as well as other holiday favorites like "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," the Hawaiian favorite "Mele Kalikimaka" (where Hayley first pulled out the uke), "Beautiful Star of Bethlehem," "Feliz Navidad," "I'll Be Home for Christmas," "Blue Christmas," and their blending of "White Christmas" with "Little Drummer Boy." Hayley and Sara also pulled out some holiday songs from the country side of the spectrum, including Kacey Musgraves' "A Willie Nice Christmas" and Suzy Bogguss' "Two-Step 'Round the Christmas Tree." Steel Blossoms also broke the news that they will be entering the recording studio starting this month to record some new songs.

With music back in live-streaming mode, western PA bluegrassers The Jakobs Ferry Stragglers resumed their "The Straggle Is In Your Living Room" performances early last month. The cast of singer and guitarist Gary Antol,

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Ray, Libby & Gary of Jakobs Ferry Stragglers

singer and fiddler Libby Eddy, mandolinist and singer Ray Bruckman, upright bass player Nikki Kreider and dobro player Jody Musser were in the Christmas spirit, breaking out teases of such holiday numbers as "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen," "Joy to the World" and "Jingle Bells." They also performed a number of original tunes from throughout their career, such as "Poison River," "Mannington #9," "The Legend of Gandy Grey," "Midnight Gown" and more, chasing each song with happy whooping afterward. After a post-New Year's Day 'straggle' in the living room on January 2, the Jakobs Ferry Stragglers head to Asheville, North Carolina for a live show later this month.

Not able to present an in-person Christmas party this holiday season due to COVID-19 concerns, my collegiate employer, Penn State Altoona, instead staged a virtual Christmas Party via Zoom. After opening words of thanks and appreciation from campus Chancellor Lori Bechtel-Wherry, attendees were invited to drop in on various Zoom rooms with a number of festive options and activities. I, of course, followed the sound of virtual music to Conner Gilbert's Christmas party Zoom performance. Also the campus' sports information director, Conner entertained the online audience with his blend of hit song favorites and Christmas tunes. Strumming acoustic in his Santa hat, Conner sang numbers from the Beatles, Green Day, Pure Prairie League, Uncle Kracker, CCR, Steve Miller Band, the Eagles, Johnny Cash, Ben E. King and more. And he celebrated the Christmas spirit with renditions of "Blue Christmas," Tom Petty's "Christmas All Over Again," "Please Come Home for Christmas" and Jose Feliciano's "Feliz Navidad." The mood was happy and cordial, and Zoom visitors clapped and bobbed their heads in approval. Conner received calls for an encore, which he honored with a version of John Denver's "Take Me Home Country Roads." Afterward, I visited another Zoom space where campus interim Director of Strategic Communications, Jonathan O'Harrow, led a round of Christmas caroling on his keyboard. Jonathan led carolers on renditions of "Santa Baby," "White Christmas," "Winter Wonderland," "Baby It's Cold Outside" and more.

Home for the holidays from his classes at Boston's Emerson College, Bedford-based singer and songwriter Coltt Winter Lepley hosted a Christmas Special live stream last month. While he did perform a few more-established holiday favorites such as "White Christmas," "Silent Night" and "Auld Lang Syne," Coltt dug deeper for some

Moose / 100 Proof

Coltt Winter Lepley

less-heralded Christmas and winter-themed morsels from the folk and country catalogs – strumming and singing such numbers as Merle Haggard's "If We Make It Through December," Townes Van Zandt's "Snowin' on Raton," Doc Watson's "Christmas Lullaby," Willie Nelson's "Pretty Paper," John Prine's "Christmas in Prison," Robert Earl Keen's "Merry Christmas from the Family," and – performing on bones – Jack White's "Christmas Time Will Soon Be Over," popularized in the film "Cold Mountain." Playing his locally-crafted Shaffer acoustic guitar (made by luthier Mike Shaffer of Salemville, Bedford County) and a 1937 Gibson L-C acoustic guitar, Coltt also did some of his own songs such as "Toilet Wizard" and "The Waffle House Song," plus songs from Woody Guthrie and more. Hear Coltt on Q94 Classic Rock on Jan. 10 as he appears on my "Homegrown Rocker" program.

I also got to enjoy two performances of holiday piano. The Sunday before Christmas, Elizabethtown's Joe Trojcak tickled the ivories with his selection of holiday favorites. Joe presented instrumental renditions of Christmas carols and time-tested seasonal favorites with his tasteful and detailed arrangements, and skillful keyboard work. Among his selections this day were "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," "Let It Snow," "Oh Christmas Tree" into "Oh

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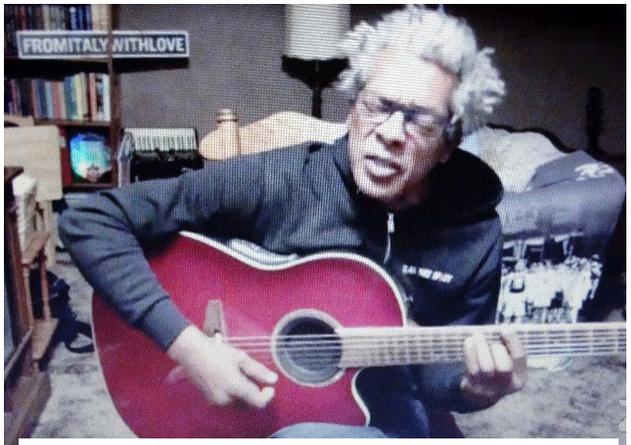
Come All Ye Faithful," a medley of tunes from Christmas season movies, "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Oh Holy Night," "Silent Night," the Peanuts pairing of "Linus and Lucy" and "Christmas Time Is Here," "Joy to the World," "What Child Is This?" and more. Joe shared a few holiday memories and acknowledged online audience members, and gave a friendly and warm performance.

And late on Christmas evening, I discovered John "JT Blues" Thompson bringing some Yuletide live-streaming cheer in his own unique way. John tickled the piano keys and sang plenty of Christmas favorites and Christmas blues tunes, plus a few of his new original songs. Opening with his piano instrumental "High Street" (named after a thoroughfare in his hometown of Bellefonte), John

John "JT" Thompson

did his bluesy arrangements on "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," "Whatcha Gonna Get Me for Christmas," "Merry Christmas Baby," "Please Come Home for Christmas," "Jingle Bell Rock," "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," "Blue Christmas," "Christmas Time Is Here" (from "A Charlie Brown Christmas"), "Winter Wonderland," "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and more. John did a Christmas parody song, "Worst Possible Time of the Year," and introduced a few new original songs he has created during his time away from live stages during this past year: "What Day," "Love Embrace" and "Boomers' Lament." And for the finale, he performed "All I Want for Christmas Is You" and his instrumental rendition of "The Christmas Song." John's performance was upbeat and cheerful, and his voice and piano playing were in great form, making for the perfect musical chaser to a great Christmas Day.

For blues fans, The Blues Society of Central PA presents a virtual blues jam every Thursday evening starting at 7 p.m. The Blues Society assembles a lineup of blues-geared artists from throughout central and eastern PA each week; this night – my first time checking it out – featured three different acts. A loose jam of blues artists led up to the official start of the night, and the first performer, Dan Mowery. Working the strings of his acoustic guitar and singing, Dan mixed blues-rooted takes on several popular numbers with instrumental workouts. Some of his numbers included "When the Levee Breaks" (created by Kansas Joe McCoy & Memphis Minnie, popularized by Led Zeppelin), Willie Cobbs/Allman Brothers' "You Don't Love Me," Jimi Hendrix's "The Wind Cries Mary," Herbie Hancock's "Chameleon" and Prince's "Kiss." Dan's arrangements on these numbers were fresh and creative, and his guitar skills and nuances were impressive. From northeastern PA, Clarence Spady was next; his musical direction geared more toward traditional blues as he demonstrated a soulful voice and smooth, skillful work on his acoustic guitar. He performed numbers from Elmore James, Howlin' Wolf, a new original number called "If My Life Was a Book," a few instrumentals and more; his set was enjoyable as well. Finishing the jam was the Chester County-based duo of Tommy Froelich and Chris Uyvari, who played a blend of blues-rocking acoustic originals and other numbers. These two sounded strong as well; with Tommy handling most of the singing duties, they did original songs such as "My Desire," "The Light," "In Your Eyes" and a song Tommy wrote for his wife, "Mellow Down Lady," with Chris demonstrating some slide guitar skills. They also pulled out a rendition of Alvin Lee's "The Bluest Blues," plus ushered in the Christmas season with the Chuck Berry-popularized "Run Rudolph Run," and did a take on "Call Me the Breeze." Tommy and Chris executed well together, showing some cool guitar nuances along the way. It all made for an entertaining evening of blues-based music, and I plan to be back for more. Check it out each Thursday through the Blues Society of Central PA's website, www.bscpblues.com, or through their Facebook page.

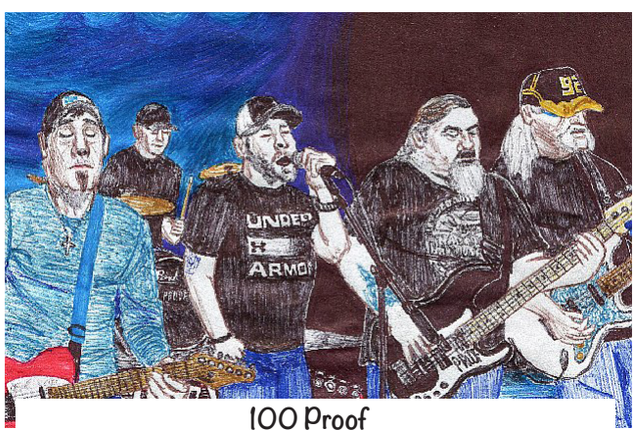


Clarence Spady /BSCP Jam

News and notes…Area seasonal music has been garnering attention; Zupe's Christmas polka, "Dasher, the Reindeer," continued to generate accolades as it earned the Akademia Music Awards award for "Best Children's Music Music Video"…The area songwriting team of Bill Dann, Jay Zimmerman and Jack Servello scored a recent holiday season local radio hit with their COVID-inspired Christmas novelty song "Santa's Curbside Pickup," which even achieved airplay on a recent online edition of "The Dr. Demento Show"…And Pittsburgh's Chip & the Charge Ups scored regional radio airplay with their farewell-bidding ode to 2020, "Under the Exit Sign," featuring guest singer Char Fields… Ted McCloskey has issued another new album, this time a collection of remixed and remastered songs from his back catalog called "Whispers and Waltzes"; the album is available for purchase through Ted's Bandcamp page…And Matt Otis & the Sound are putting the finishing touches on their new album, which will be released this year.

Please send correspondence and recordings to: Jim Price, 1104 S. Catherine St., Altoona, PA 16602. You can also e-mail me at jptheprofessor@gmail.com. And if you're into social networking, look me up on Facebook. SUPPORT LOCAL MUSIC IN 2020! And keep WASHING YOUR HANDS and WEARING THOSE MASKS!

~All photos & sketches from pages 14-19 by Jim Price



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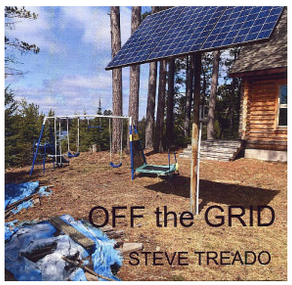
PA MUSICIAN REVIEWS

By Jim Price

JONAH WHALE – VI (Adamsapple Records) Northeastern PA-based rock artist Jonah Whale has evolved his own hard-rocking style and identity over his first five albums. That evolution extends into his latest and sixth album, appropriately called VI. Inspired by classic 1970s and 80s hard rock, but informed by newer flavors of the 1990s and 2000s as well, Jonah crafts 15 distinctive and captivating songs over this album's course. Jonah again shows his knack for the quick-hitting, rock anthem-styled song hook, and emphatically drills his song hooks into the cranium with his blend of booming rhythms, muscular guitar riffs, and his tense and hearty vocal wail coupled with layered harmonies and gang choruses. Jonah delivers the enthusiastic fist-pumping power anthems here, including the robust album-opener "Pump It Up," "Ready Set Go," "Nothin' Like This," "Raise Your Hands" and

the arena-ready disc closer "Let's Get Loud." Beyond the anthems, Jonah shows some different nuances and curve balls - "Aliens in Hollywood" takes more of a space-rock vibe that hints of early 70s-era David Bowie, while "Radio Active Blonde" taps into 1980s new wave rock terrain, and "Take Me There" channels a Mediterranean Led Zeppelin "Kashmir" flavor. Breaking with past albums, Jonah shows a milder and slower side with the romantic-toned power ballads "She Moves Like the Wind" and "Do You Remember Me," and shows a contemplative twist on the solid and steady "My Tattoo." Jonah sings with conviction throughout the album, demonstrating a strong and nuanced voice that can go from wild to mild as the mood of each song warrants. He also displays a way with words, conveying easy-to-digest lyrics and quick-hitting wordplay hooks as well. Handling all instrumentation, Jonah displays dexterity and skill on all fronts. Recorded, mixed and mastered at Jonah's own Adamsapple Records and produced by Maxwell Paris, VI sounds appropriately thunderous, deep and sharp. Jonah Whale delivers another vibrant and charged slab of rock with VI, and continues to advance his brand of hard-hitting music in catchy and intriguing directions. (The album can be obtained through Jonah Whale's website, www.jonahwhale.com.)

STEVE TREADO – OFF THE GRID (no label) With COVID-19 preventing his band, Jampact, from entertaining on central PA stages during 2020, State College-based multi-instrumentalist and singer Steve Treado has instead concentrated on his own music, and recently issued his latest album, Off The Grid. While his previous albums tested the waters of blues, rock, Americana and other flavors, Off The Grid finds Steve concentrating more toward folk, alt-country and Americana flavors, with touches of blues and rock peppering the album's 16 songs. Steve sings and plays an assortment of instruments here, including guitars, piano and keys, mandolin and percussion. Steve's songs are catchy and mostly mild-mannered, and each presents its own unique journey. "Never" starts off the album in a driving folk-rock vein, with its theme of resolving to nev-



er disappoint or inflict harm. As its title suggests, "Keep On Smiling" generates an uplifting and Americana flavor with words of embracing each new day with happiness and hope. Steve ventures into a country ballad direction with the piano-fueled "Some Way to Remember" and a lyrical wish to rekindle the flame, and delivers a punchier modern country vibe with "Take A Look at Me Now." Steve shows a lighter rock direction with "Better Than Never," and flexes a harder edge on the dark-toned "Howl at the Moon." He celebrates making music on the road with the folk-driven "Travelin' Band," and expresses appreciation of the blues on the acoustic and upbeat "Bluesy Music." Steve sings his words with a consistent, relaxed and rustic delivery, and crafts good-sounding vocal harmonies and vocal layers throughout the album. His arrangements are tasteful and serve each song, and the instrumental performances are smooth and flow together well. Self-recorded and produced at Steve's own Hedgerow Studio, this album sounds clear, cohesive, balanced and polished. Steve Treado's gift of songcraft shines on Off the Grid, a warm and engaging set that satisfies from start to end. (The album can be obtained through Steve's website, www.stevetreado.com.)

THUNDER VEST – NEXT ROUND (Iron City Records) Prophesizing to their minions on cramped dive bar stages since 2012, Pittsburgh punk-rocking quintet Thunder Vest unleashes their latest round of no-holds-barred, punk-fueled anthems on their 14-track album Next Round. The cast of Scott on vocals, Steve and Neil on guitars, Phil on bass and Kevin on drums deliver infectious, fast-firing two- and three-chord anthems that are short, sweet and to the point. The adrenaline is constant, as Thunder Vest keeps the tempo hot throughout. They set the tone with the rapid fire rant "Drag City," mix a slight touch of surf-rock attitude on "Backseat Romance," and Scott wails some harmonica during the fast and fiery "Wonder Sluts." The title track "Next Round" offers a raucous and rowdy drinking anthem, while the group salutes the "Karate Kid" movie franchise on the speed burner "Sweep the Leg," containing the noteworthy lyrical rant "So macho...Ralph Macchio." Scott teams with guest Betti Coates for the wild one-night

stand duet "Do It," and the group punks up a Cars classic with their version of "Best Friends Girl." Thunder Vest's performances are charged and go-for-broke; the band keeps foot on the accelerator, while Scott sings and howls with vigor and intensity. Recorded and mastered by The Cheats' Eric Wrecker at Red Room Studios, Next Round sounds bristling, sharp, loud and proud. Their blend of simple melodies, velocity and wit makes Thunder Vest's Next Round a jubilant punk rock joyride, and a satisfying set to crank up loud as you imbibe your next round. (The digital album and vinyl edition can be obtained through Thunder Vest's Bandcamp web page.)

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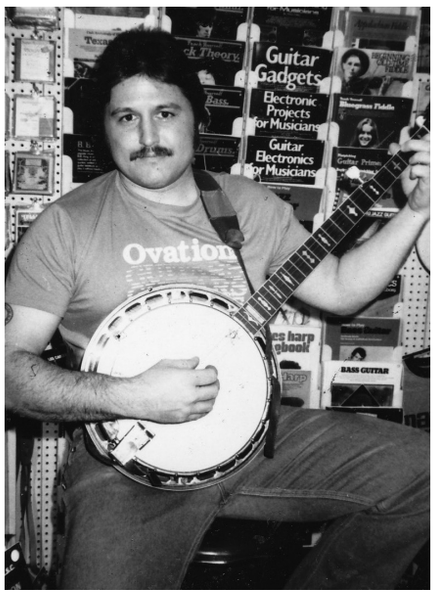

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